

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) A tread (12) for a tire (10), the tread (12) having two or more circumferentially continuous grooves (20,22,24) and a continuous rib (30,32) between an adjacent pair of circumferentially continuous grooves (20,22); the tread (12) characterized by:

a plurality of circumferentially spaced hook-shaped semi-blind grooves (40), each of the hook-shaped semi-blind grooves (40) having an open portion (41) and a single blind portion (42) extending from the open portion (42) wherein a centerline (45) that bisects the open portion (41) and the blind portion (42) is inclined obliquely relative to an equatorial plane (EP) of the tread, the hook-shaped semi-blind grooves originating each in a one of the circumferentially extending grooves (20,22,24) and arranged in two rows (1,2,3,4) in the continuous rib (30,32), a first row (1) of hook-shaped semi-blind grooves (40), each hook-shaped semi-blind groove (40) being inclined obliquely as measured from a centerline (45) bisecting the hook-shaped semi-blind grooves (40), the second row (2) of hook-shaped semi-blind grooves (40) being similar in shape, but circumferentially offset from the hook-shaped semi-blind grooves in the first row (1), the rows (1, 2) of hook-shaped semi-blind grooves being laterally spaced from each other.

2. (currently amended) The tread of claim 1 wherein the hook-shaped semi-blind grooves (40) of the second row (2) are oppositely inclined but similarly oriented relative to the hook-shaped semi-blind ~~groove~~ grooves (40) of the first row (1), each hook-shaped semi-blind ~~groove~~ groove (40) of the second row (2) intersecting the other adjacent circumferentially continuous groove (20,22).

3. (currently amended) The tread (12) of claim 1 wherein the hook-shaped semi-blind grooves (40) of the second row (2) are similarly inclined but oppositely oriented relative the hook-shaped semi-blind ~~groove~~ grooves (40) of the first row (1), each hook-shaped semi-blind ~~groove~~ groove (40) of the second row (2) intersecting the other adjacent circumferentially continuous groove (20,22).

4. (original) The tread (12) of claim 1 further characterized by a sipe incision (50) extending from and oriented in the same direction as a blind portion (42) of the hook-shaped semi-blind grooves (40) of the first row (1) and second row (2).

5. (currently amended) The tread (12) of claim 1 further characterized by three circumferentially continuous grooves (20,22,24), and ~~two—a second~~ continuous rib[[s]] (30,32), each rib (30,32) being adjacent to and between a pair of the circumferentially continuous grooves (20,22) or (22,24), and wherein the hook-shaped semi-blind grooves (40)

of one rib (30) are oppositely oriented relative to the hook-shaped semi-blind groove (40) in the other rib (32).

6. (currently amended) The tread (12) of claim [[+]] 5 wherein the hook-shaped semi-blind grooves (40) ~~[[ef-]]in~~ each rib (30,32) intersecting a common circumferentially continuous groove (22), intersect the common circumferentially continuous groove (22) at a substantially circumferentially aligned location relative to the intersection of the axially adjacent hook-shaped semi-blind grooves (40) of the other rib (30 or 32).

7. (original) The tread (12) of claim 6 wherein the tread (12) has a pair of lateral tread edges (14,16) defining the tread width (TW) and the distance halfway between the lateral tread edges (14,16) defines the equatorial plane (EP) of the tread (12), and the common circumferentially continuous groove (22) is centered at the equatorial plane (EP) of the tread (12).

8. (original) The tread (12) of claim 1 wherein the centerline (45) of the hook-shaped semi-blind grooves (40) is oriented at an angle θ in the range of 30° to 60° relative to the equatorial plane (EP) of the tread (12).

9. (original) The tread (12) of claim 1 wherein the centerline (45) of the hook-shaped semi-blind grooves (40) is oriented at an angle θ about 45° relative to the equatorial plane (EP) of the tread (12).

10. (currently amended) The tread (12) of claim 1 further characterized by a pair of shoulder ribs (34,36), a first shoulder rib (34) being adjacent to and lying between ~~[[the]]~~ a first lateral edge (14) and a circumferentially continuous groove (20) and a second shoulder rib (36) being adjacent to ~~[[the]]~~ a second lateral edges (16) and between a circumferentially continuous groove (24) and the second lateral edge (16).

11. (currently amended) The tread (12) of claim 10 wherein each first and second shoulder rib (34,36) has a plurality of circumferentially spaced curved grooves (46) intersecting and adjacent the respective circumferentially continuous groove-grooves (20,24) at locations in substantially linear alignment with the location of intersection of the hook-shaped semi-blind grooves (40) and the respective circumferentially continuous groove-grooves (20,24).

12. (currently amended) The tread (12) of claim 11 wherein each curved groove (46) changes orientation by about 90 degrees as the groove (46) extends axially toward a lateral tread edge (14,16).

13. (currently amended) The tread (12) of claim 12 wherein each curved groove (46) has a

full depth (D) at the lateral extremes and a reduced depth (d) therebetween the lateral extremes, the reduced depth (d) being about 50% of the full depth (D) or less[[+]].

The above amendments are supported by the original specification.